

Message Text

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EXDIS

CAIRO FOR ASS'T SECRETARY ATHERTON

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR PGOV IS JO EG XF US
SUBJ: CONVERSATIONS WITH PERES AND EBAN CONCERNING RES 242
AND CURRENT STATE OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

1. ATHERTON AND I MET PRIVATELY WITH SHIMON PERES IN
JERUSALEM FEB 27 FOR A REVIEW OF THE CURRENT NEGOTIATING
SITUATION. MOST OF THE CONVERSATION CONSISTED OF PERES
RECOUNTING HIS IMPRESSIONS OF HIS MEETING IN VIENNA WITH
SADAT. HIS SENSE OF SADAT'S CONCERN AND MOOD AT THAT TIME
MESH VERY CLOSELY WITH ATHERTON'S MORE RECENT MEETING

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WITH SADAT IN CAIRO, WHICH HAS BEEN REPORTED IN DETAIL.
PERES WAS GUARDED PRIMARILY WHEN IT CAME TO REPORTING
SADAT'S VIEW OF THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT AND ITS POSITIONS,
ALTHOUGH HE IMPLIED THAT SADAT HAD SAID MANY OF THE SAME
THINGS ABOUT BEGIN WHICH WE HAVE HEARD SEPARATELY IN
WASHINGTON AND CAIRO.

2. IN ANSWER TO PERES' QUERIES, ATHERTON BRIEFED HIM IN SOME DETAIL ON CURRENT STATE OF NEGOTIATIONS OVER THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, AND ON HIS ASSESSMENT OF SADAT'S CURRENT MOOD. PERES WAS VERY INTERESTED IN HSSEIN'S SITUATION, BUT ATHERTON MADE CLEAR HE COULD NOT SAY MUCH ABOUT IT UNTIL HE HAD BEEN TO AMMAN.

3. PERES WAS ESPECIALLY ANXIOUS TO KNOW WHAT THE MAJOR ROADBLOCKS ARE AT PRESENT IN THE NEGOTIATION. ATHERTON STRESSED THE GROWING SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DISPUTE OVER INTERPRETATION OF THE WITHDRAWAL PROVISION IN 242, ALONG WITH THE PROBLEM OF THE SETTLEMENTS AND THE MORE GENERAL QUESTION OF FINDING A FORMULA FOR THE PALESTINIAN/WEST BANK PROBLEM.

4. PERES ACKNOWLEDGED READILY THAT THE LABOR GOVERNMENTS HAD ALWAYS INTERPRETED 242 AS APPLYING TO THE WEST BANK AS WELL AS THE SINAI AND THE GOLAN. HE WAS OBVIOUSLY SOMEWHAT SCORNFUL OF BEGIN'S CURRENT EFFORT TO ARGUE THAT ANOTHER INTERPRETATION WAS POSSIBLE.

5. THE PREVIOUS NIGHT AT MY DINNER FOR ROY AND BETTY ATHERTON, ABBA EBAN HAD HELD FORTH AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT THIS ISSUE. HE ALSO STATED FIRMLY THAT THERE HAD NEVER BEEN ANY QUESTION IN HIS MIND OR THAT OF HIS GOVERNMENT WHEN 242 WAS ADOPTED THAT IT REQUIRED AT LEAST SOME WITH-
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DRAWAL ON ALL FRONTS, INCLUDING THE WEST BANK. HE SAID HE THOUGHT IT WAS A GREAT MISTAKE FOR THE CURRENT ISRAELI GOVERNMENT TO TRY TO ARGUE ON THE BASIS OF "FLAWED JURISPRUDENCE." HE SAID IT WOULD DO NO ONE ANY GOOD TO TRY TO TWIST THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL PRECEDENTS IN THIS WAY. EBAN IS PREPARING AN ARTICLE TO BE PUBLISHED IN THE JERUSALEM POST AND MA'ARIV TAKING STRONG ISSUE WITH THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT'S CLAIM THAT 242 NEED NOT APPLY TO THE WEST BANK. HE SAID, IN FACT, THAT HE HAD FIRST INTENDED TO MAKE A STATEMENT TO THIS EFFECT IN THE KNESSET. HE SUBSEQUENTLY THOUGHT BETTER OF I, TO PRECLUDE STIMULATING BEGIN TO MAKE A SPEECH IN WHICH HE GOES FIRMLY ON THE PUBLIC RECORD IN DEFENSE OF HIS INTERPRETATION OF 242--THEREBY MAKING IT ALL THE MORE DIFFICULT FOR HIM SUBSEQUENTLY TO CHANGE HIS POSITION.

6. COMMENT: FROM THESE TWO CONVERSATIONS, IT IS CLEAR THAT WE WILL HAVE READY SUPPORT FROM LABOR PARTY LEADERS WHO WERE INTIMATELY INVOLVED WITH EARLIER STAGES OF NEGOTIATION IN ARGUING OUR INTERPRETATION OF THE 242 WITHDRAWAL PROVISIONS. JUST HOW MUCH THIS WILL HELP US WITH BEGIN IS, HOWEVER, AT LEAST HIGHLY QUESTIONABLE.

LEWIS

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